Fort Belknap College Library

IMLS Enhancement Grant

"Meeting Community Needs through Expanded Outreach Services"

ABSTRACT

This project has been developed to address the goals of the Fort Belknap College Library (FBCL), the educational needs of the Fort Belknap community, and the goals of the Library Services and Technologies Act (LSTA). The overall goal of the project is to enhance the library's outreach programs and services in order to more effectively meet identified community needs and increase library use. The project will achieve this goal over a two-year period by: (1) increasing the variety of outreach opportunities offered by the library, (2) increasing the diversity and availability of online information resources, and (3) expanding library holdings on topics of local interest, particularly Native American history, culture and literature. In order to accomplish these objectives, library staff will carry out a number of project activities, including: holding library sponsored Tribal Community Circles, expanding diversity of subscriptions to online databases, and increasing library holdings on topics of local interest. As a result of these activities, the library's outreach programs and services will address identified educational needs and interests among both children and adults in the Fort Belknap community, while meeting the library's goals of improving access to library resources and increasing community use. The project's success in achieving its goal and objectives will be evaluated in terms of its effectiveness in achieving specific and measurable outcomes related to increases in: library use among community members of all ages, access to the library's online information resources, circulation transactions, and patron satisfaction.

Application Narrative

I.   Assessment of Need

This proposal is submitted by the Fort Belknap Indian Community Council (FBICC), which serves as the official governing body of the Fort Belknap Indian Community of the Fort Belknap Indian Reservation. The present reservation was created by an Act of Congress on May 1, 1888 and serves as the home of the Assiniboine and Gros Ventre Tribes. It is located in northcentral Montana and extends across portions of both Blaine County and Phillips County. Roughly rectangular in shape, the reservation is approximately 28 miles wide (east to west) and 40 miles long (north to south), and covers an area of 675,147 acres. See Attachment A for a map of the reservation.

There are over 5,200 enrolled members of Fort Belknap's Gros Ventre and Assiniboine Tribes, 2,959 of whom live on the reservation. Fort Belknap Agency is the primary residential center on the north end of the reservation and also serves as the headquarters of the tribal government. Hays (35 miles south of Fort Belknap Agency) and Lodge Pole (40 miles southeast) are the population centers for the south end of the reservation. Many tribal members also live in rural locations or scattered site housing across the reservation. In addition, approximately 1,000 tribal members live off the reservation in the neighboring communities of Harlem (three miles northwest), Chinook (20 miles west) and Havre (45 miles west).

Economically, Fort Belknap is among the poorest areas in Montana and the United States. According to the 2003 Bureau of Indian Affairs Labor Force Report, the unemployment rate on the reservation is 74%. Census data show that 44.2% of the reservation's families with children under 18 are living below the poverty level. Out of Montana's 56 counties, Blaine County, which contains approximately 90% of the Fort Belknap Reservation, ranks dead last in median household income.

The project described in this proposal will be administered by the Fort Belknap College Library (FBCL). The library facility is located at Fort Belknap Agency and housed in the Red Whip Center, a community center jointly operated by the Fort Belknap Indian Community and Fort Belknap College (FBC). The library was established in 1984 to serve as an information resource center for the entire Fort Belknap community and to support the educational mission of Fort Belknap College. The facility covers an area of 3,000 square feet and has seating capacity for 28 patrons. It contains approximately 10,000 volumes covering a full spectrum of subject areas, from popular fiction to analytical chemistry. Library holdings also include a variety of materials in other formats, including periodicals, newspapers, microform, video, and computer software. Patrons have access to information resources not physically housed at the library through interlibrary loan, computers with Internet access, and online subscription services for reference materials, periodical literature, and databases. Along with two typewriters, the library possesses twelve computers, which were purchased with funds received from previous Basic Library Services and Enhancement Grants provided by the Institute of Museum and Library Services (IMLS). All library records have been converted to a computerized catalog and circulation system that is available on the library's computers.

Currently, the library employs one full-time professional librarian, who serves as library director, and one para-professional library assistant. The library's regular hours of operation are from 8:00 am to 7:00 pm, Monday through Thursday, and 8:00 am to 5:00 pm Friday. The library director reports directly to the FBCL Board (library board), a four-person body comprised of one Gros Ventre community representative, one Assiniboine community representative, one FBC faculty member, and one FBC student. The library board provides guidance and direction for the planning, operation and evaluation of all library services.

In 1998, the library board completed a comprehensive self-study review of library services that resulted in the identification of a number of short-term and long-term goals. In 2001, the library board reviewed and revised these goals. Four of the library's updated short-term goals are to: (1) improve and

expand library services available to community members, (2) increase library usage by members of the Fort Belknap Gros Ventre and Assiniboine Tribes, (3) provide expanded library services to the children and young adults of the Fort Belknap Reservation, and (4) increase the availability of specialized materials concerning local and tribal history and affairs to foster interest in the heritage of the Fort Belknap Reservation.

In recent years, library board members have expressed their concerns about the library's effectiveness in meeting the information needs of *all* residents of the Fort Belknap Reservation. Results of a library use questionnaire distributed during June and December of 1998 show very high levels of satisfaction among library users. For example, 91% of the respondents said that the library was easy to use, and 96% reported that the library staff was helpful. However, these numbers reflect only the experiences of those residents who actually visit and use the library. The library's relatively low number of circulation transactions (1,200/year) suggests that a significant portion of the reservation population may not be using the library at all.

In order to increase community use, library staff are making a concerted effort to offer library programs and services that address identified community needs and interests. In 2001, the Fort Belknap Small Business Development Center (SBDC) conducted a community-wide survey to assess the educational needs and interests of community members, FBC students, and school children. Among all survey groups, participants showed high interest in educational programs and learning opportunities that would increase knowledge of, and interest in, Native American culture, specifically Gros Ventre and Assiniboine culture. For example, when college students were asked about their personal interest in a variety of topics for non-credit/personal development workshops, the topics that had the highest level of interest included: Beadwork (46%), Native American Language (42%), Natural Medicine (41%), Quill Work (35%), Native American Sign Language (30%), Tanning Hides (30%), and Native American Cooking (28%). Through increased holdings in Native American culture, history and literature, as well as through outreach programs involving tribal elders, this project will enable the library to remain responsive to these identified community interests.

The project has been designed to address both library goals and community needs, as well as the goals of the Library Services and Technologies Act (LSTA). Specifically, the project addresses the LSTA goals of "expanding services for learning and access to information and educational resources in a variety of formats...for individuals of all ages," "developing library services that provide all users with access to information through local, state, regional, national and international electronic networks," and "targeting library services to help increase access and ability to use information resources for individuals of diverse geographic, cultural, and socioeconomic backgrounds, ... individuals with limited functional literacy or information skills...and for underserved urban and rural communities, including children from birth to age 17, from families with incomes below the poverty line."

This project also will address the LSTA goal of enhancing services to those in rural communities living below established Department of Health and Human Services poverty levels. As mentioned earlier, nearly 50% of all families with young children living on the Fort Belknap Indian Reservation fall below the poverty level; as such, a library sponsored Tribal Community Circle and community outreach projects described in this proposal will have a significant impact among this LSTA target population.

The overall goal of this project is to enhance the FBCL's outreach programs and services in order to more effectively meet community needs and increase library use. The project will achieve this goal through the successful completion of the following three objectives:

- Increase the variety of outreach opportunities offered by the library through events such as library sponsored Tribal Community Circles and visits by library staff to Hays Community Center;
- Increase the availability of online information resources by expanding and diversifying the library's online database subscriptions; and

- Expand library holdings on topics of local interest, particularly Native American history, culture and literature to accommodate identified community interests and support cultural education programs across the reservation.

By accomplishing these three objectives, FBCL will strengthen its community outreach programs in ways that address identified needs and interests among children and adults in the Fort Belknap community. At the same time, the successful completion of these objectives will allow the library to achieve its goals of improving library services, increasing library usage, providing expanded services to children and families, and fostering knowledge and interest in the cultural heritage of the Fort Belknap Reservation. Finally, project objectives directly promote LSTA goals by increasing the library's linkages with educational and information services, improving access to information through electronic networks, and enhancing the library's programs and services for low-income children and their families.

II. Project Design and Evaluation Plan

As stated above, the goal of this project is to strengthen the library's outreach programs and services in ways that will address identified community needs and increase library use. The project is designed to achieve this goal over a two year period by (1) increasing the variety of outreach opportunities offered by the library (2) increasing the diversity and availability of online information resources, and (3) expanding library holdings of local interest, particularly Native American history, culture and literature. What follows in the remainder of this section is a description of the approach to be employed in accomplishing these objectives, as well as the specific activities undertaken to implement the project.

The project will be evaluated according to its success in realizing the goal and objectives established in this proposal. Project evaluation will include both formative and summative components, with the successful achievement of the goal and each objective measured in terms of the project's effectiveness in meeting the specific and measurable outcomes presented in this section of the proposal.

Formative evaluation will occur throughout the two-year project period during monthly meetings of the library board. At each meeting, the library director will report on all project activities to date, and board members will have the opportunity to discuss the activities' effectiveness in contributing to the achievement of the project goal and objectives according to the established schedule of completion. This informal project assessment will allow the library board and staff to identify successes and shortcomings in program delivery, develop contingency plans to address unanticipated difficulties, and modify project plans to take advantage of new and unforeseen opportunities. Library board comments and recommendations will be used to inform ongoing project planning and will be included in the director's semi-annual performance and evaluation reports.

Summative evaluation will occur at the conclusion of the project period. At this time, the project director will prepare a comprehensive project performance and evaluation report describing the project's overall effectiveness in meeting its stated goal and objectives. Listed below are the specific activities that will be employed to achieve these objectives, along with the anticipated outcomes that will be used to measure their successful implementation.

Objective 1:   Increase the variety of outreach opportunities offered by the library

Project Design: Recent outreach efforts have been limited to occasional visits to the Hays Community Center. No funding has been available for these visits making it a strictly volunteer effort. During past visits, several community members have sought assistance from the library staff and have been very appreciative of the service. The FBCL has also hosted an after school reading activity program for approximately three years. The program is for children grades K through 6, providing a safe place for them to spend three afternoons a week reading, learning, and having fun in the library setting.

Through this project, the FBCL staff will schedule semimonthly (twice a month) library sponsored Tribal Community Circles. These will be presented at the FBCL on various days at various times, allowing the greatest number of community members to attend. Programs for the Circles will consist of speakers talking about and demonstrating topics of local interest such as storytelling featuring tribal elders, beadwork, natural medicine, quill work, quilting, tanning hides, Native American cooking, and occasional book discussion series. These, and other, topics will address needs identified by data from the Fort Belknap Reservation-Wide Educational Needs Assessment which indicated interest among both children and adults for learning opportunities that will enhance knowledge of, and interest in, Native American culture, especially those of Fort Belknap's Gros Ventre and Assiniboine Tribes. Facilitators will include tribal elders and other community members who are considered experts in the topic of interest. Participants in 'hands-on' demonstrations such as quill work or beading will be provided with supplies so they may fully take part in the presentation. Book discussion series participants will be provided a copy of the discussion book. Circle discussion and demonstration leaders will be paid an honorarium for their time. Circle times, topics and presenters will be determined through informal discussions with community members as well as formal surveys. Through entertaining and informative gatherings these Circles will promote the FBCL to community members who have not traditionally been library users. The community will be informed about the Circles through a sustained promotional campaign of flyers, posters, print media, radio announcements and presentations by library staff to community groups. The first Circle will be held by November 1, 2006 and continue semimonthly.

A second phase of the outreach project will involve a member of the FBCL staff making monthly visits to the Hays Community Center. By November 1, 2006, a schedule will be set and posted at the Center. The schedule will also be announced through flyers, print media and announcements on the local radio station. During these visits, the staff member will provide instruction on the use of the databases available through the FBCL website, and offer assistance with how to use the internet more efficiently and general computer use such as wordprocessing and spreadsheets.

Evaluation Plan:

Activity A:	Implement schedule of semimonthly library sponsored Tribal Community Circles
Outcomes:	At least 275 patrons (duplicated count) will participate in one of the forty-eight programs.
Activity B:	Implement schedule of monthly visits to the Hays Community Center
Outcomes:	At least 120 (duplicated count) community members will be assisted during one of the twenty-four visits.

Objective 2: Increase the diversity and availability of online information resources

Project Design: The library will expand and diversify the its existing online database subscriptions. Library staff will use project funds to subscribe to full-text databases (such as JSTOR) covering a range of subjects of interest to local community members. Information from these databases will be available for use by on-site patrons, as well as those accessing library resources through the Internet. By employing this two-pronged approach, the library will maximize the benefits of expanded online access to library information resources. Many full-text databases will be reviewed for possible purchase. Databases will be selected based on the best cost in relation to the interests of and benefits to the community. Subscriptions will be purchased and activated by January 2007.

The purchase of the full-text online database subscriptions will greatly improve access to library resources for all members of the Fort Belknap community. However, the benefits are especially significant for residents of the southern end of the reservation. Currently, residents of Hays and Lodge

Pole must drive approximately 75-80 miles (round trip) to visit the library and access its information resources. With the databases, these community members will be able to access many library resources from a home computer, the Hays-Lodge Pole High School computer lab, and/or public access computers located in the Hays Community Center. This will result in improved services to the reservation's most underserved communities, while, at the same time, increasing the number of people using the library's information resources. Library staff will inform community members of these improvements in access and information resource availability through a sustained promotional campaign using a combination of flyers, posters, print media, radio announcements, and presentations to community groups and schools. Also, monthly visits to the Hays Community Center by library staff will instruct and assist patrons in the use of the databases.

Evaluation Plan:

Activity A: Increase the number of online databases available to library patrons.
Outcome: By January 1, 2007, the number of subscriptions to online databases will increase by 66%, from 3 to 5.

Objective 3: *Expand library holdings on topics of local interest, particularly Native American history, culture and literature*

Project Design: As mentioned earlier, data from the Fort Belknap Reservation-Wide Educational Needs Assessment indicate a high interest from the community for educational programs and services that provide instruction and information about Native American history, culture and literature, especially those of Fort Belknap's Gros Ventre and Assiniboine Tribes. In response to these identified community interests, educational institutions serving Fort Belknap (including Head Start, public schools and Fort Belknap College) have been expanding their cultural education efforts. The staff and board of the FBCL recognize the vital role that the library plays in providing the information resources needed to support this important work. As such, library personnel are requesting project funds to purchase books, videos, magazines and specialty holdings to expand the library's existing collection and support local cultural education efforts.

During the initial phase of these acquisition activities, the library director will meet with cultural education representatives from local educational institutions, cultural societies and community organizations, such as the Bilingual Program and Fort Belknap College Native American Studies Program, to gather input in developing a purchasing plan for books and other holdings on topics of local interest, particularly Native American history, culture and literature. Once developed, this plan will be used to guide collection development during the remainder of the project period. Special care will be taken to ensure that acquisitions address the needs and interests of library patrons of all ages, including children. Project funds also will be used to cover the cost of processing supplies associated with the new acquisitions, including bar code labels, security strips, book jacket covers and call number labels.

Evaluation Plan:

Activity A: Develop and implement a purchasing plan to increase the size of the library's collections.
Outcome: By the end of the project period, the library will increase the size of its by 1500 holdings.

All project activities have been designed to foster and sustain positive changes for the library and

Fort Belknap community for years to come. They are intended to promote increased awareness and use of library services by reaching out to young audiences and their families, by improving access to information resources for *all* community members, and by expanding library holdings in topics of community interest. Project activities involve children, parents, elders, teachers and community members at various levels to develop and implement programs that, once established, can be continued with minimal expenditures well into the future.

Through the successful completion of the activities employed to realize these three objectives, the library will have dramatically strengthened its outreach programs and services in ways that will accomplish the project's ultimate goal of effectively meeting community needs and increasing library use. To evaluate the project's success in meeting this goal, library staff will use the following measurements:

(1) During the final quarter of the project period (April - September 2008), library staff will survey patrons to determine their satisfaction with library programs and services, using a survey instrument similar to the one presented to patrons between September and November of 2005. Results from this new survey will be compared to previous results, with increased patron satisfaction demonstrating the library's effectiveness in meeting community needs.

(2) Circulation statistics from 2005 will be used as baseline data for comparison with circulation statistics gathered during the project period. As a result of expanded outreach programs and services, it is anticipated that total circulation transactions will increase by 20% at the end of the project period, from 1,200 to 1,440 per year. These data will document increased community use of library resources.

(3) At the beginning of the project period, library staff will maintain monthly records of the number of "hits" on the library's website. As a result of increased online information resources (catalog, databases, online subscriptions) available through the library's website, the number of "hits" is expected to increase 20% by the end of the project period. These data will document increased community use of the library's electronic information resources.

In addition to providing monthly reports to the library board, the library director will provide semi-annual and final project reports to the Fort Belknap Indian Community Council to keep them abreast of project activities. The library director also will submit semi-annual and final performance reports to the Institute of Museum and Library Services.

III.   Project Resources

Budget: The Fort Belknap College Library and Tribal Archives will commit significant cost sharing to this project in the form of in-kind contributions. The library director will devote 25% of her time to serve as project director. The FBCL will provide this portion of her salary, as well as associated fringe benefits and indirect costs, as an in-kind contribution. Over the two-year project period, this amounts to an in-kind contribution of $31,004, or approximately 20% of the total amount of funding requested from IMLS ($149,525) and 17% of the total project budget ($180,529).

Personnel: As stated above, the library director will be responsible for overseeing the successful completion of all project activities. She has 19 years of library experience (thirteen of those as library director of the FBCL) and earned her Master of Arts degree in Library and Information Science from the University of Missouri-Columbia. Besides her knowledge and experience in managing library resources, she also has excellent computer skills. Along with setting up and maintaining the library web page, she also has taught several computer courses at Fort Belknap College. See Attachment B for the project director's resume.

The library assistant also is well-qualified for performing the tasks called for in this project, which include planning and publicizing project activities, facilitating the library sponsored Tribal Community Circles, and assisting the library director in all phases of library operations. The current library assistant

has her Associate of Arts in Liberal Arts with an emphasis in Childhood Education and also a para-professional certificate in Elementary Education. She also has many years of experience volunteering for various community activities including planning and implementation of a community Reading Circle. See Attachment B for the library assistant's resume.

By employing a full-time library assistant, the project design ensures that both the director and her assistant will have adequate time to complete all project activities according to the project time line. The director will devote 25% of her time (10 hours per week) to managing the project, planning project activities, supervising community outreach activities, handling all acquisitions and equipment purchases, administering the project budget, conducting data collection and evaluation activities, preparing project reports, and disseminating project results and information. In order to accomplish all of these activities, the director will rely on her assistant to assist in planning project activities, coordinating publicity efforts, carrying out daily library operations, and performing various customer service activities. With two highly qualified, full-time staff members, the library will have the personnel needed to effectively carry out the activities described in this proposal.

Management Plan: The library director will serve as project director and will be responsible for overseeing the successful completion of all project activities. She will coordinate project planning and evaluation, plan and implement community outreach projects, purchase database subscriptions, and complete all acquisitions and supply purchases. The library assistant will work directly under the project director's supervision. She will participate in all planning and publicity activities, coordinate participants and facilitators for the library sponsored Tribal Community Circles, and perform all other project-related tasks as assigned. She will also be available to work evenings, allowing the library to be open additional hours.

The project director will report on the project's progress at monthly library board meetings. In turn, the board will provide their full support and assistance to the project and play a key role in ongoing formative evaluation efforts. As discussed in Section V (Evaluation), project success will be measured in terms of specific outcomes related to the project's stated goal and objectives and in accordance with the project's established schedule of completion. Mid-term and final progress reports will be submitted to the Fort Belknap Indian Community Council, as well as the Institute of Museum and Library Services.

The library director also will work with a project planning committee to assist in the planning and implementation of activities associated with Objective 3 (Native American collection development). The planning committee will include individuals from local organizations/agencies such as the Bilingual Program and Fort Belknap College Native American Studies Program. These individuals will offer recommendations to help the library director develop a purchasing plan for expanding the library's Native American collection in a manner that supports current cultural education and informational activities within the community.

The FBCL is very capable of implementing this project and successfully meeting its stated goal and objectives. The library has been in continuous operation since 1984 and has strong support from both the Fort Belknap Indian Community Council and Fort Belknap College. The library stands as an established component of the reservation's educational and cultural infrastructure.

The project director is uniquely qualified to oversee the successful implementation of this project. She has over 19 years of library experience, and for the past thirteen years she has served as library director at the FBCL. For a more detailed description of her qualifications for directing this project, see Section IV (Personnel).

The current library facility was built in 1984 and renovated in 2000. Although small, the library is properly equipped, clean and well-maintained. The renovation project allowed the library to put on a new roof, re-paint interior walls, and add a new room to house the reference section and quiet reading area. All current library facilities, supplies and equipment will be available for use in project activities. The library

is fully networked with twelve computer work stations with complete Internet access, wireless capabilities for patrons with laptop computers and extra connections are available for future expansion. The library director maintains the web page for the library.

Finally, as part of her duties for the past thirteen years, the library director has been responsible for developing and administering the library budget. She will be responsible for managing all project funds, which will be handled as a restricted account managed under a fund accounting system, where discrete line items are maintained for each budget category, i.e., "salaries," "fringe benefits," "equipment purchases," "travel," etc.

IV.   Impact and Intended Results

Documentation of the project's success will occur through the evaluation process. Data collected during the project period will be compared to previously gathered baseline data (patron surveys, holdings records, circulation statistics, children's use, etc.), so that project personnel can demonstrate changes attributable to project activities. The implementation of all project activities will be carried out in accordance with the schedule of completion included in this proposal. The library director's monthly reports to the library board will include all relevant data gathered during the preceding month, as well as a record of project expenditures, activities accomplished, and benchmarks realized. This will provide the library board with the information needed for effective formative evaluation. In addition, monthly progress reports will document all ongoing project activities. Semi-annual and final reports will be developed from the monthly reports by presenting this information in a summary fashion.

As an active participant in a number of professional organizations, the library director has a variety of avenues through which she can disseminate project results. Locally, this will occur through the presentation of annual and final project reports to the Fort Belknap Indian Community Council. In addition, the library director will present the results of the project at Fort Belknap College staff meetings and through articles and program announcements in the *Blaine County Journal~News~Opinion, Phillips County News* and *Fort Belknap News.* Regular program announcements on KGVA will keep radio listeners informed of project activities and accomplishments.

At the state level, the library director belongs to the Montana Library Association (MLA) and the Montana Indian Tribal Library Group (MITLG). Annual meetings and newsletters of these two organizations provide ideal forums for the library director to present the results of this project to peers across the state of Montana and its seven Indian reservations. In addition, the library director is linked to other tribal librarians in the United States and Canada via the Tribal Librarian Listserve, through which she can disseminate the results of the project to her peers electronically.

Nationally, the library director belongs to the American Library Association (ALA), participates in the Tribal College Librarians Professional Development Institute, and will attend the annual meeting of IMLS Enhancement Grant project directors. Each of these forums provides opportunities for the dissemination of project results through written articles and formal and informal presentations. The library director will disseminate project results to her peers through at least three of these professional networks.

This project can serve as a model for other small, rural, reservation libraries in three ways. First, it demonstrates how library outreach programs can be developed to effectively meet a community's identified educational and informational needs. Second, it provides a model of how libraries can use technological advances to improve access to information resources for *all* members of the community, even those living in extremely rural and historically underserved locations. Third, it provides a strategy for collection development efforts within the community in order to encourage and sustain library usage among both children and adults.